DRAFT - Final will be in Lotus Notes Correspondence

Dear Interested Party:

The Decision Notice/Affirmation of Prior Decision, Revised Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI), and Response to 2011 Supplemental EA Comments for the Smith Creek Vegetation Project is enclosed. Upon thorough review of the 2007 EA, two Supplemental EAs (2008, 2011), public comments and Forest Service responses for the Smith Creek Vegetation Treatment Project, I have made the determination that project related activities do not constitute a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not needed and a Revised Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) was prepared pursuant to Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15, Chapter 10, Section 18.4. The handbook also states, "Reconsider the original decision, and based upon the EA and FONSI, issue a new decision notice or document that the original decision is to remain in effect and unchanged".

I have carefully reviewed the original December 18, 2007 decision for the project in conjunction with additional information provided in the two Supplemental EAs and Revised FONSIs. I have also considered public comments and Forest Service responses to the Supplemental EAs. I have come to the conclusion that the new information associated with the Supplemental EAs gives me no reason to supplement, correct, or revise the December 18, 2007 decision, so the original decision should remain in effect and unchanged.

This Decision Notice/Affirmation of Prior Decision summarizes the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects of approximately 800 acres of vegetation treatments (thinning) and 300 acres of prescribed burning within the Smith Creek WUI that were analyzed in the EA. The project is located in the Crazy Mountains along the northwest corner of the Yellowstone Ranger District, approximately 35 miles north of Livingston, Montana in T5N, R9E, Section 1 & T5N, R10E, Sections 4, 6, & 8 and consists of the portions of the Smith Creek drainage that are in the closest proximity to residences, other structures, and primary transportation routes.

The analysis for the project was prepared to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, and the Gallatin National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (1987).

The EA for the project analyzed in detail the Selected Alternative (Alternative 3), the No Action Alternative (Alternative 1), and the Proposed Action (Alternative 2). Five other alternatives were also considered but not in detailed analysis.

Copies of the Decision Notice/Affirmation of Prior Decision and Revised FONSI are available on the Internet at http://www.fs.fed.us/r1/gallatin on the Lands & Resource Management page. To request a hard copy, contact Barbara Ping by phone at (406) 522-2558, or by letter to Attn: Barbara Ping, Forest Ecology Group, Bozeman Ranger District, 3710 Fallon St. Suite C, Bozeman, MT 59718.

In accordance with 36 CFR 215.11(b) this reaffirmation of my prior December 18, 2007 decision for the Smith Creek Vegetation Treatment Project is not subject to administrative appeal. The above regulation provides for appeals of a new Decision Notice after revision of an EA, pursuant to FSH 1909.15, Chapter 10, Section 18, "However, only that portion of the decision that is changed is subject to appeal". I have thoroughly reviewed the original decision for the project in conjunction with information provided in the Supplemental EA, public comments, and Forest Service responses to those comments, and have determined that my original decision will remain in effect and unchanged.

Additional information is available from Project Leader, Barbara Ping at the Bozeman Ranger District (406-522-2558) or Ron Archuleta, District Ranger at the Yellowstone Ranger District (406-222-1892).

Sincerely,

Ron J. Archuleta

Ron J. Archuleta
Yellowstone District Ranger

Enclosure